

With Flying Colors (a McRoll in the REAL World story)

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\_Mari & Ilna-I can't believe we're coming up on our 2-year anniversary. It's been a great ride so far and I'm looking forward to many more years. Your comments and feedback on my stories ALWAYS makes them better and I'm more grateful than you could possibly know.\_

\_Sandy-I've said it before and I'll say it again, I'm lucky to have met you all those years ago in a fandom far, far away.\_

\_REAL Worlders-you guys are beyond awesome. Your enthusiasm and support are a gift I do not take for granted. Please don't interpret my lack of response to your reviews as a lack of gratitude. It's simply a function of not enough hours in a day. Every single review is read and treasured. THANK YOU!\_

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><p><strong>With Flying Colors (11)\*\*

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting," Lieutenant Cecil Delaney said as he entered his office and closed the door behind him. "The bride for tomorrow's ceremony wanted to make a few last minute changes to the service."

He took a seat behind his desk and smiled openly at Steve and Catherine who were seated across from him in his visitors' chairs. He took note of their relaxed demeanor and their linked hands. He was accustomed to seeing couples fidget nervously, worried about what was about to happen and whether or not they would gain his approval.

Something about the two people sitting in front of him was very different. They had a level of confidence and self-assurance he didn't often see. Granted they were older than many of his couples but he could tell there was more to it than that.

The depth and connection of their love was apparent before they ever spoke a word.

He'd served with Catherine on the Enterprise, and gotten to know her a little, but he'd never had the pleasure of meeting Steve.

"I appreciate your patience. I know the two of you are very busy so let's get right to it. As I explained on the phone the purpose of this meeting is twofold. To discuss the specifics of the ceremony itself but also to talk a little bit about what it means to be married and to come up with some effective strategies to help you move forward successfully as a married couple. To that end, did you both complete the questionnaire I sent over to your office?"

"Right here," Steve and Catherine said in unison as they each handed Lieutenant Delaney a packet of papers.

"Good â€¦ good," Delaney nodded. "Let's take a look at this and see what we have. Now you didn't compare answers while you were completing these, right?"

He looked up just in time to see both Catherine and Steve looking mildly offended.

"You said not to," Steve responded, as though that was all that needed said.

"Of course, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to imply â€¦ it's just that some couples are so eager to make a good impression they â€¦"

He glanced at Steve and Catherine apologetically then cleared his throat.

"Clearly that's not the two of you though so â€¦ let's get started.  
Section 1: Conflict Resolution."

"We never fight," Steve stated matter-of-factly.

"Everyone fights, Commander," Delaney smiled indulgently. "It's healthy for a relationship. Gives both parties a chance to clear the air."

Steve shook his head and shrugged. "Catherine and I aren't the type of people who sweat the small stuff. And that's what most people fight over, right? Stuff like who left the lid off the toothpaste and who loaded the dishwasher wrong?"

"In many instances, yes," Delaney nodded in agreement. "But there are also larger issues that come up in any relationship."

"Steve and I both believe in dealing with issues while they're still small," Catherine said. "We talk things out, really listen to and consider each other's points of view. We don't let things turn into big issues."

Lt. Delaney was clearly impressed. "That's an admirable way of dealing with things."

"When we were both on active duty I lived with the reality that every day could be my last. Or worse yet, Catherine's last." Steve's face grew serious. "Now with Five-0 we still deal with danger every day. That kind of lifestyle gives a person perspective. There are a lot of things in my life and in our relationship worth fighting for but very few things worth fighting about."

Catherine squeezed his hand and smiled. "Well said, Commander."

"Alright then," Delaney nodded. "Let's move on. Section 2: Partnership. Do the two of you engage in joint decision making?"

"Absolutely," Steve and Catherine nodded resolutely.

"How about the details of the wedding? Have those all been joint decisions?"

Steve grinned sheepishly.

"I'm guessing no?" Delaney continued.

"Boris, our wedding planner, has had a few issues getting Steve to say anything other than 'Whatever Catherine wants'," she explained.

Delaney leaned back in his chair and looked at Steve. "You're not interested in the details of the wedding, Commander?"

"Please, call me Steve. It's not that I'm not interested," he clarified. "I just want Catherine to have exactly what she wants."

"He's actually been very helpful," Catherine said. "If I narrow down the possibilities to three or four he's happy to weigh in with a preference on pretty much anything."

"Sounds like you found a system that works for the two of you," Delaney said.

"As long as it ends up with us being married that's all I care about," Steve said and Catherine beamed at him.

"Section 3: Support." Delaney turned the pages of their questionnaires. "You each gave the other the highest possible marks."

"The very first day I ever talked to Catherine I asked her for a favor and she came through for me. She made me work for it," Steve grinned, "but she came through. There's never been a day since, as first a friend and then a girlfriend, that I questioned her support. It has made me a better person in more ways than I can count."

Catherine smiled softly, and though she was addressing Lieutenant

Delaney her eyes never left Steve's. "From my earliest days at the Academy where more than a few of the male midshipmen were less than thrilled with idea of having women in their ranks, through my choice to take a position in a male dominated field like Naval Intelligence, to ultimately leaving the Navy and beginning a career with Five-0, an opportunity that many people thought I only got because of my relationship with the boss, Steve has been an absolute rock in my life. His support means more to me than I can say and I can't imagine my life without it."

Delaney smiled. The words they spoke about each other were very touching but at the same time they appeared to be having another deeper conversation non-verbally.

"I can clearly see you both make your relationship a priority."

"Absolutely," they said in unison.

"Division of chores around the house?" Delaney asked. "I know it seems like a mundane topic but it's an important factor in day-to-day happiness."

Steve finally broke Catherine's gaze and turned to look at their officiant. "We don't have specific chores. If we see something that needs to be done, we do it. Cooking, cleaning, laundry â€| whatever."

"We remodeled the kitchen together, and built a new deck, with help from our friends of course, and next we're going to tackle the master bathroom. We've got this working as a team thing down pat," Catherine nodded confidently and it was Steve's turn to beam.

Delaney looked at the papers in front of him. "Ok then â€| Section 4: Trust. Do you trust â€| "

"Implicitly," Steve cut in.

"With my life," Catherine agreed.

"Ok," Delaney smiled at the quickness and certainty of their replies. "Does that include setting appropriate boundaries with the members of the opposite sex?"

Catherine burst out laughing and Steve rolled his eyes.

Delaney watched for a few seconds then asked, "Is there something the two of you would like to share?"

"It's nothing â€| it's just," Catherine tried to pull herself together. "Many women â€| \_many, many\_ women â€| throw themselves at Steve on a regular basis. I mean obviously they're attracted to him physically, then add in the ex-Navy SEAL and head of the Five-0 Task Force thing and they just can't seem to control themselves."

"She's exaggerating," Steve insisted.

Catherine shook her head. "I'm really not."

"How do you handle these women's' advances?" Delaney asked

interestedly.

"Most of the time he doesn't notice," Catherine grinned. "Though everybody around him does."

"Catherine claims I'm oblivious. She even has our friends and relatives saying the same thing now," Steve said.

"Are you oblivious, Steve?" Delaney asked with a smile.

Steve shrugged. "Possibly. But if I am it's just because I have no interest in any other woman coming on to me."

"And when women come on to him, does that bother you?" Delaney addressed his question to Catherine.

"Do I wish they wouldn't do it? I guess so. But do I ever worry about Steve taking one of them up on it? Never. Not even for a second." Catherine shook her head adamantly.

"What about you, Steve? Catherine is a beautiful woman. Any jealousy issues there?"

Delaney remembered many of the sailors on the Enterprise competing for Catherine's attention and how she was always polite, but never more than that, with all of them.

"I don't like it when men objectify Catherine or make unwanted advances towards her, but that's just because it shows a lack of respect. As I often say, there are many things I worry about in this life but Catherine's fidelity is not one of them."

Delaney couldn't help but smile. When Catherine first contacted him about being the officiant at the wedding he was excited to say yes. He asked around for anyone who knew Steve and Catherine as a couple or had spent time with them since Catherine's retirement and every person he talked to said the same thing.

They're perfect for each other.

Sitting across from them and not only hearing their answers to his questions but seeing the way they interacted with each other he could see it was true. Still he needed to go over the rest of the questions for the sake of procedure and paperwork.

"How is it working together? Does that put a strain on things at all?"

"No," Catherine shook her head. "When we're at work Steve's the boss. We observe the chain of command. I'm perfectly fine with that."

"Catherine's one of the finest investigators I've ever known. She's been an asset to the team since the day she joined."

"Neither of you has a problem with a little too much time spent together?"

The confused look on both of their faces, as though they couldn't possibly even conceive of the idea, made Delaney smile.

"Okay well putting your jobs aside for the time being I'm looking at your answers here and you both seem to place a great deal of importance on putting work aside and spending personal time together."

"It can be tough sometimes leaving work at the office," Catherine admitted. "But even when we're working long hours on a tough case we try to carve out some time every day to just be together. I know for me even a few minutes can completely recharge my batteries and help me in every aspect of my life."

"We've had lots of long stretches apart over the course of our relationship," Steve pointed out. "Sometimes we went weeks without being able to share even a phone call. Now that we're together full-time I don't take it for granted. Time alone with Catherine will always be a priority for me."

"I wish all my couples were as clear about their priorities as the two of you," Delaney said genuinely.

"I think can assume Section 5: Togetherness isn't an issue. For the question that asked about activities you enjoy participating in with your partner both of you needed to attach a separate piece of paper to complete your list."

Steve chuckled. "We enjoy spending time together."

"We challenge each other to try new things," Catherine added. "It keeps life interesting."

"Section 6: Emotional Intimacy." Delaney took a minute to review their answers. "The two of you seem to know each other remarkably well. Catherine, I do see here though that Steve gives you much higher scores for openness than he gives himself."

Catherine looked at Steve quizzically. "Really?"

"Definitely. You're much better at saying what you mean. Sometimes I have trouble finding the right words."

"You don't need the right words, Steve." She rubbed his forearm comfortingly. "You always manage to get your point across."

"That's just because you're so good at reading me."

"It's because I know you," Catherine smiled.

"And I'm very grateful for that," Steve said quietly.

"I can't comment on how you used to be, Commander McGarrett â€¦ since this is the first time we've ever met, but you definitely don't seem to be having any problems finding the right words today."

Lieutenant Delaney placed an x through Steve's self-critical evaluation of his communication skills. He could clearly see the two people in front of him understood each other completely and had no issues with making their feelings known, with or without words.

"Section 6: Warmth and Affection. I noticed you each mention attempting to avoid outward displays of affection in public."

"With our jobs it's important we maintain a certain professionalism," Catherine explained.

"But when you're off duty?" Delaney asked.

"We're not the type of people who enjoy being all over each other in public," Steve shook his head. "We like to keep the more private parts of our relationship private."

"But when you're alone together â€| any complaints?"

"None," they both smiled.

"Under the question about whether you're verbally affectionate with your partner, Commander, you answered 'I am now but that wasn't always the case'. What does that mean exactly?"

"It means it took me a long time to actually say the words 'I love you,' or to talk about marriage and commitment," Steve replied.

"And how do you feel about that, Catherine?"

"I've always believed actions speak louder than words. And Steve's actions have always spoken very loudly."

Steve squeezed her hand.

"Section 7: Chemistry. Without even reading your answers I can see the two of you have that it spades. And again, for the question about how your partner enriches your life you both attached a separate piece of paper to complete your answer."

"Even after all these years my heart still skips a beat every time he enters a room," Catherine grinned.

"And I still think she's the most beautiful woman I've ever seen," Steve said as a smile lit up his entire face.

Delaney shook his head good-naturedly. He usually told his couples to be prepared for the fact that time cools the passion of youth but it clearly hadn't in these two people.

"Section 8: Children. It says here you've discussed the issue and each feel like you're on the same page."

"We have," Catherine nodded. "We're both aware that my age will become a factor in having children over the next several years but we've talked about it several times and we feel comfortable we're on the same page. We know that children will change everything in terms of our lives and careers. We're going to get there it just isn't going to be immediately after the wedding."

Steve nodded and squeezed her hand.

"And finally Section 9: Family. Affectionately known by many of my couples as Dealing with the In-laws."

"That's not an issue for us," Steve said. "My father is deceased and my mother is â€| absent by choice â€| but Cath's parents are absolutely amazing. Two of the best people I've ever met. They've made me feel like part of the family since day one and if I ever need advice or just someone to talk to I know they're both there for me."

"That's very nice to hear," Delaney said, clearly moved by the sincerity of Steve's words.

"Steve's sister Mary is like the sister I never had," Catherine smiled. "Having her and her little girl Joan in our lives is such a blessing. And his Aunt Deb shows us every day what true strength really is."

"On top of blood relatives," Steve added, "We have an absolutely wonderful circle of close friends that are as much family to us as the people we're related to. My partner Danny and his daughter Gracie to start but there are so many more."

"And we seem to be adding to the list every day," Catherine said happily.

Delaney put their questionnaires aside and clasped his hands in front of him on the desk.

"You two passed this questionnaire with flying colors. I can clearly see you're ready to get married. So â€| let's talk about the details of the ceremony itself."

"Yes, let's," Catherine and Steve replied happily in unison.

**\*\*THE END\*\***

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